

THE INDIANS.

Report of the Secretary of the Interior.

THEY MUST BECOME CIVILIZED

They Must Make Their Final Stand for Existence, or Adapt Themselves to the New Conditions.

The Indians.

WASHINGTON, December 6.—The annual report of the Secretary of the Interior reviews, at great length, the relations of the Indian tribes to the government, and settlers residing near their reservations; the outbreaks of the year and the causes of them are considered. The recommendation of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that the less guilty of the rebellious Ojibwas should be transported to an island in the Pacific Ocean as a penal colony, to earn their own living by fishing, stock raising, etc., or be sent to the military prison at Fort Leavenworth is endorsed. It is recommended that the Southern Utes be located in Indian Territory, and that the Pines of Arizona be settled on homesteads and given farm implements and other assistance. The subject of leasing of land by Indians to cattle companies, is taken up and after showing the passive consent of the late secretary to such leases and the evil that has resulted from the practice the Secretary says: from all the facts developed on the subject, I am convinced that the assistance rendered by the respective Indian agents in the making of these alleged leases was directed more for the interests of the cattlemen than that of the Indians, placed under their care and supervision. While many of the Indians favored the leasing of their lands for grazing purposes, others were opposed and protested against such use and occupation of their reservations, and refused to participate in the making of the alleged leases, or to accept any share of the money received thereunder. Sufficient influence, however, seems to have been brought to bear upon a majority of the respective tribes, to induce them to enter into the arrangements made. In my judgment, not the least among such influences were the encouragement and persuasions of the respective Indian agents or some of them at least; and in many instances I fear they have shared in the profits of these speculative transactions. After speaking of the encroachments of railroads on Indian rights the Secretary says: It is evident that the Indian race has reached a crisis in its history. The Indian can not longer exist in this country in a savage or semi-civilized state, nor can he longer recede before the advancing march of civilization. It has already surrounded him. The movements of population eastward and northward and southward have gone on with unprecedented rapidity until every reservation is closed in and pressed upon by colonies of settlers, miners, ranchers and traders. The practice of moving the Indians to more distant reservations can be continued no longer. He must make his final stand for existence where it is now, unless he can adapt himself to the necessities of the new conditions and partake of this all-pervading civilization his extinction will be sure and swift. The need of a permanent scheme of Indian management to meet this emergency is pressing upon the government with imperious urgency. The Indian race is no longer a source of danger to the peace or security of this great republic. Most of the reservations are encircled by powerful communities, and these upon the frontier are completely in the hands of our military forces. Nor is the Indian any longer an obstacle to our national progress, or to our material development. So far as the interests of our own people are concerned, apart from the needs of the Indian population, the Indian problem could be easily solved by simply withdrawing all government supervision over these people and conferring upon them the rights of American citizenship. Those who would not pass away would be soon absorbed into American society. After incorporating into our body politic 4,000,000 of blacks in a state of slavery and investing them with citizenship and suffrage, we need not strain at the goat of 250,000 Indians. It would merely be an additional morsel and a very small one. Such a course, however, would be more cruel and destructive to the Indian in the helpless condition to which the extension of settlements will soon reduce him, than a war of extermination. I recommend that a portion of every reservation be divided up into several tracts of suitable size for farms, to be allotted to each individual as his sole and separate estate. Provision should be made against the power (until after a time) limited of selling or mortgaging the same, or even leasing it to any but Indians living within the same reservation. Without legislation of this kind, all efforts to make the Indian support himself by his own labor will prove fruitless and unavailing. To overcome his natural aversion to labor there must be the incentive given alone by a source of guarantee that the fruits of his labor should be enjoyed in security. No man will clear forests, inclose fields and cultivate them and rear houses and barns, when at any moment he may be removed and carried off against his will to some distant and unknown region. The ownership of land, freeholding, tends to inspire individual independence, pride of character, personal industry and the development of the domestic virtues. Provision should be made that the Indian accepting a patent for his land shall not thereby forfeit any of his rights, as a member of his tribe, nor the laws of the United States extend to Indians generally. I favor the policy recommended by my predecessor, in this office, Secretary Kirkwood, of reserving to proper size the existing reservations when entirely out of proportion to the number of Indians thereon, with the consent of the Indians, and upon just and fair terms; and second, of placing by patent the titles to these diminished reservations as fully under the protection of the courts as are the titles of all others of our people to their lands. The surplus portion cut off should be subject to sale and the proceeds invested for the benefit of the Indians. The execution of it should be cautious and tentative. My recommendation that only a portion of each reservation be divided into separate tracts as stated above, is based upon the conviction that we must lead the Indian to holding lands in severalty by ripen-

ing their right of occupancy under their commercial system into a fee simple by a gradual process and not by the sudden abolition of a system which is with them a religion as well as a law of property. Those who urge the speedy breaking up of tribal relations, the abolition of the reservation system and the localization of individuals upon separate allotments of land as a general policy, overlook the important fact that the Indian race is not a homogeneous race. It consists of numerous, widely separated tribes, speaking different languages, and varying greatly in customs, habits and conditions, from the enlightened commonwealths of the five nations to the wild, fierce, roving bands who eke out by plunder the scanty subsistence they derive from the chase and government rations. Any general policy adapted to the advancement of one tribe, would be disastrous and destructive to another. Each must be managed as its peculiar circumstances and conditions require. The Secretary recommends the appointment of a commission of not more than six men of integrity, intelligence and experience, and of such ability as to be able to comprehend the course of treatment and methods of management best adapted to ensure the speedy progress of the respective tribes and bands, to visit each of the reservations and investigate and report the condition, peculiar circumstances, and the needs of the Indians residing thereon. The Secretary recommends, in order to destroy the evil influence of "squaw men," the passage of a law providing that whenever an Indian woman shall marry a citizen of the United States, she shall be deemed a citizen, and that all children born of such marriage, shall be deemed citizens. Under the provisions of this law no Indian woman would marry such a man with the certainty of losing her membership with her tribe and her right to remain on the reservation. The condition of the Indian schools, the report says, is gratifying. The Winnebago and Crow Creek reservation troubles are reviewed and it is announced that the President's order withdrawing those lands from settlement has been almost universally obeyed. The exceptions, if any exist, are cases in which a removal would cause suffering. The story of the Oklahoma invasion is retold and it is stated that these unlawful movements have rendered it unwise at present to open negotiations with the Indians owning the titles to these lands for the purpose of opening them to settlement.

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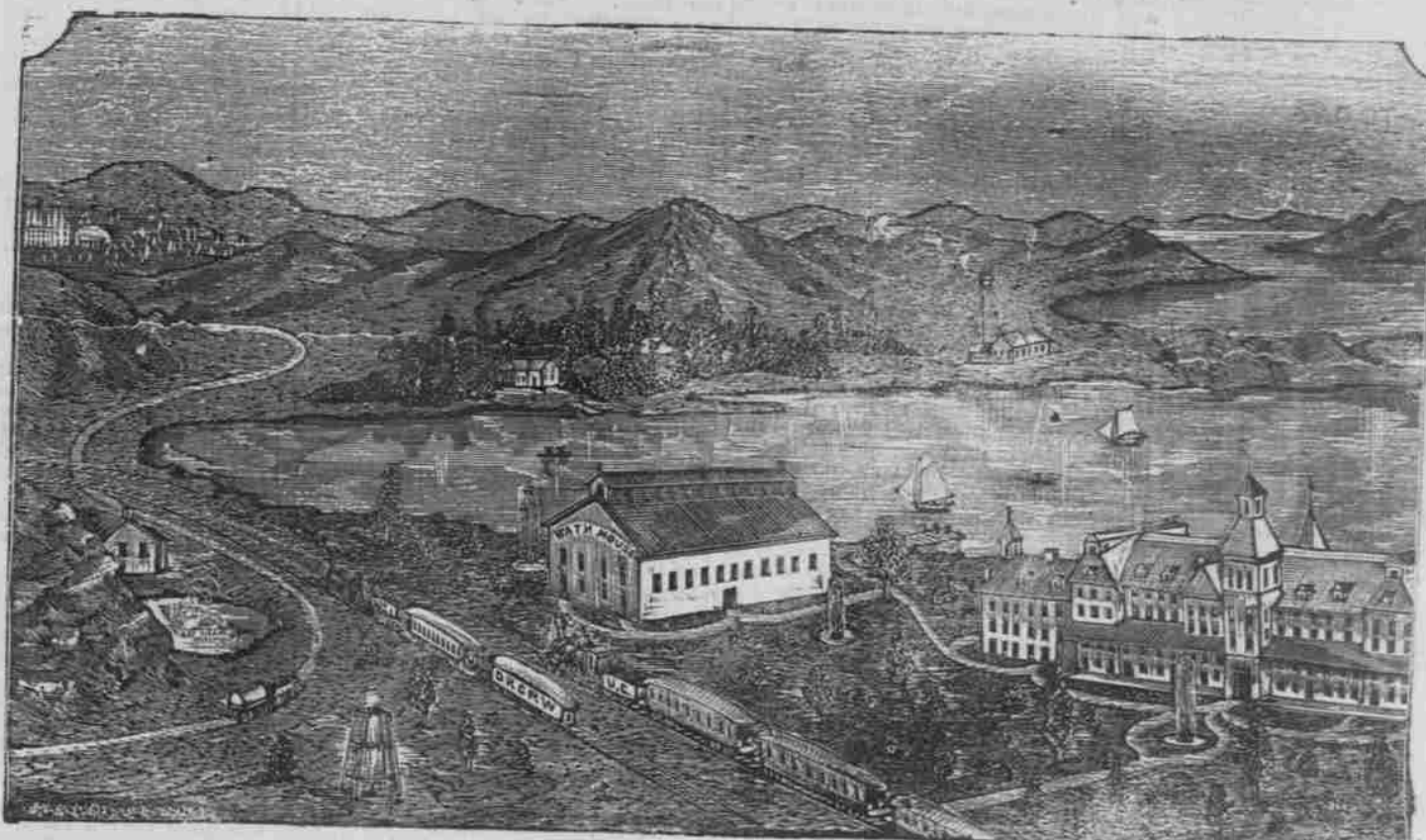
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